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# Manner Posters as an Element of the Japanese Linguistic Landscape

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**Abstract** Train stations are one of many micro-landscapes in the wider linguistic landscape, certainly of any city or urban setting. The station environs contain a wide variety of textual and visual information, wall posters being one. This article will introduce manner posters found in train stations in Japan. Manner posters are those that aim to alter poor, or encourage better behaviour on public transport. It will first describe the concept of the 'linguistic landscape' and then point out features of train stations as a linguistic landscape milieu. Finally it will describe certain basic aspects of manner posters, which are a particular feature of that context.

**Key Words:** linguistic landscape, Japan, train station, manner, posters

## 日本の言語景観におけるマナー啓発ポスターの特徴

クリストファー・ベイン

**要旨** 電車の駅は、どの都市においても、多岐にわたる言語景観の一つである。駅の周辺には、多種多様な文字や視覚的情報があり、掲示されているポスターはその一つである。本論文では、日本の駅に掲示されているマナー啓発ポスターを紹介する。マナー啓発ポスターは公共交通機関での間違ったマナーを正し、より良い行いを促すことを目的としている。本論文では、言語景観の概念を述べ、言語景観の環境としての駅の特徴を挙げる。最後には、マナー啓発ポスターの基本的な特徴、特に、駅に掲示されているマナー啓発ポスターの特徴について述べる。

**キーワード：**言語景観、日本、駅、マナー、ポスター

## Introduction

This article will introduce manner posters found in train stations, which are a

micro-landscape in the overall linguistic landscape in Japan. It will be divided into three sections and considering of the potential breadth of each, it will aim to provide an overview of each. It will first describe the concept of the ‘linguistic landscape’ and then point out features of train stations as a linguistic landscape milieu of their own standing. Finally it will describe certain basic aspects of manner posters, which are a particular feature of that context.

## Defining the ‘linguistic landscape’

We can consider these two ideas, ‘linguistic’ and ‘landscape’ separately.

### Landscape

Very simply, a ‘landscape’ can describe some natural, largely terrestrial scene. It is usually a wide vista with one dominant focus but may encompass many smaller details. It is one that is of largely geographical features but often includes humans or evidence of human intervention. In this sense, it is something that exists or had existed in one location. We might call this the ‘primary landscape’.

A ‘primary landscape’ can also be replicated or recorded in some way as a ‘secondary landscape’, reproduced two-dimensionally as a painting rendered and based on an actual place at a certain point in time. It may, however, include detail that the artist considers important and generic to the scene, or it could even be entirely imaginary. The advent of photography widened the medium through which a primary landscape can be portrayed and captured ‘as is’ at an exact moment in time. The recent ability to digitally photograph and manipulate has blurred this somewhat. In a three-dimensional state, Japanese gardens are famous as imagined landscapes planned in miniature, and so-called landscaped gardens are a popular feature in the author’s home country of Australia. There may be other modes for a landscape viewed to be then rendered, such as in sculpture, bas-relief or 3D computer visual.

Whether in its natural ‘primary’ state or ‘secondary’ and reproduced in some way, the feature in common here is that a landscape can be a physical thing that exists in time and space, be it The Himalayas on the Nepal-China border or a Monet painting hanging in The Louvre. We can see it or even feel it, depending on the medium. We can also say that in all the senses described above, landscapes are not necessarily static. Any combination of influences may change

them. As for actual natural primary landscapes, time, the seasons and environment changes will affect them cyclically or even permanently. Time may also may affect even artworks. All the forms of landscape described above can be changed by human intervention. Mountains and rivers can be moved, gardens redesigned, photographs altered.

In that a landscape as described above involves a visibly wide scene with details, including human activity, and that it can change, it is very appropriately and often used in a metaphorical sense. In general these refer to the current state of things in a given context, and also might refer to what may be. The context or milieu could be almost anything that may involve a past state, changing trends or conditions and a future. A quick and simple sample of news articles that include 'landscape' in the headline demonstrates this metaphorical sense (emphasis added): 'new *music* landscape' (Thomson), 'the *news* landscape' (Bu), 'the *biomedical research funding* landscape' ("Mapping"), 'the *healthcare* landscape' (Vermuelen), '*cultural* and *economic* landscape' (Pentilla), '*fashion* landscape' ("China's"), '*edible* Landscape' (O'Neill), 'the *political* landscape' (Collins et. al.), 'the *sports* landscape' (Murphy), '*education* landscape' (MacGregor). From music and fashion to politics and economics there is the suggestion of change and sometimes conflict in the full headline, and also that humans play a clear role.

## Linguistics

Linguistics is the objective and systematic scientific examination of the form, meaning and context of human language as symbols in the communication process. It can be studied in several areas: phonology (sounds), morphology (words), syntax (structure), pragmatics (effect on behavior) and semantics (meaning). We can also include the lexicon of a language since it has a role in all of these five areas. But we could say that these areas are more traditional aspects of linguistic studies.

In the context of this paper we must add non-verbal communication and semiotics, both of which also concern communication and meaning-making in ways other than what is traditionally described by linguistics. The process of communication also involves, to a very great degree, non-verbal communication which Samovar and Porter describe as, "all intentional and unintentional stimuli between communication parties, other than the spoken word" and it can involve

“humanly and environmentally generated stimuli” (in Chen & Starosta 1998: 83). The ‘stimuli’ that are ‘humanly generated’ include a wide range of communication forms more commonly known as ‘body language’. ‘Environmentally generated stimuli’ would include effects such as lighting, colour and interior arrangement.

On semiotics, Dansei describes it as, “The discipline that endeavors to understand the human quest for meaning”, and remarks that, “It does so by unraveling the meaning of symbols, known more exactly as signs, that make up the *system of everyday life* that we call a *culture* or a *society*” (vii). In its simplest it is a study of non-linguistic signs.

### **Linguistic Landscape**

Humans have been linguistically treating the landscape (in all the senses above) for perhaps 40,000 years (Aubert et. al). Coulmas opens his description of several ancient artifacts and buildings with the claim that, “Linguistic landscaping is as old as writing” (13). The current academic study of linguistic landscapes (LL) is quite recent. At its most basic, the wider interpretation of ‘linguistic’ and the dual meanings of ‘landscape’ combine to describe a field of study that can be enormous in breadth:

LL touches various fields and attracts scholars from a variety of different and tangent disciplines: from linguistics to geography, education, sociology, politics, environmental studies, semiotics, communication, architecture, urban planning, literacy, applied linguists, and economics...

(Shohamy & Gorter 2009: 1)

Ben-Rafael et. al concur and point out that it is “a field of interest and cooperation among applied linguists, sociolinguists, sociologists, psychologists, cultural geographers and several other disciplines” since “the LL is the scene where the public space is symbolically constructed” by “the marking of objects — material or immaterial — with linguistic tokens”, and these, once analyzed, “relate to cultural, social, political and economic circumstance” (2010: xi). What it boils down to is: we can learn a lot from what elements of language that humans purposely display in public.

Landry & Bourhis (1997: 25) are generally credited with the genesis of a definition of the LL as,

The language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings combines to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration.

While other studies of language on public signage predate them, Landry and Bourhis' paper is "recognized as the first major attempt to link publicly displayed — or emplaced — discourse to some aspect of sociolinguistic reality of the place [it being] different communities sharing a particular territory" (Jaworski & Thurlow 2010a: 9–10). Backhaus, who has researched widely on the linguistic landscape in Japan, claims the Japanese rendering, *gengo kaikan* (言語景観), was used by Masai in the early seventies (2007: 48). Further embellishments on Landry and Bourhis reveal that broader interpretations or possibly different terms are required. Shohamy and Gorter describe the LL as "... language in the environment, words and *images* displayed and exposed in public places... for functional reasons... for symbolic reasons" (emphasis added 2009: 1).

### Alternatives to 'Linguistic Landscape'

Above I have described linguistics but added non-verbal and semiotics to it. Some researchers take issue with the term 'linguistic' in 'linguistic landscape' in that it refers to the written word, and this does not at all represent many signs; others likewise consider the use of the term 'landscape'.

Jaworski and Thurlow use the term 'semiotic landscape' taking it to "mean, in the most general sense, any (public) space with visible inscription made through deliberate human intervention and meaning making", opting for semiotic over linguistic so as to include "the way discourse interacts with other discursive modalities: visual images, nonverbal communication, architecture and the built environment" (2010a: 2). In support, Kress and van Leeuwen (2001: 46) suggest that,

In an era of multimodality, semiotic modes other than language are treated as fully capable of serving for representation and communication. Indeed, language, whether as speech or as writing, may now often be seen as ancilliary [*sic*] of other semiotic modes: to the visual for instance. Language may now be 'extravisual'.

Kress and van Leeuwen, in fact, state it is a ‘communicational landscape’ (op. cit.).

Ben-Rafael, Shohamy and Barni mention the “‘natural décor’ of the urban space” (2010: xv), with the “urban space tak[ing] the form of a city” (ibid.: xii). Signs are described as “environmental print” (Dagenais et.al. 2009: 253) and we can consider “cities as text” (Mondada 2000 in Dagenais et. al. 2009, 253). In general, studies of linguistic landscapes focus on public spaces in urban areas.

Furthermore, Gorter (2006b) firstly says *landscape* does not reflect this, so the term *cityscape* is more apt. That term has already been appropriated by the fields of cultural geography and urban planning, however. He perseveres with the term and prefaces it with ‘multilingual’ because “in most places the cityscape due to globalization will not be monolingual” (Gorter 2006b: 83).

All of these terms have value and while the term ‘linguistic landscape’ may not be ideal (Spolsky 2009: 25), it is the most widely-used term, so for this paper, all the alternative terms and definitions will be subsumed under the term ‘linguistic landscape’ (LL).

## Top-down and bottom-up in the linguistic landscape

It is generally accepted that elements in the LL are either top-down or bottom-up. These can also get described as official or non-official, and government or private. Top-down refers to official bodies, primarily any level of government, but also certain companies that control public facilities. Backhaus includes private public transport companies in his exhaustive study of Tokyo’s LL (2006: 56). LL features all signage, textual and non-textual, for roads and streets, government buildings and public services as such, from police services to garbage collection. Top down signs provided essential guidance for the public and there can be no ambiguity or room for ‘poetic licence’. Uniformity is the norm.

Bottom-up refers to everything else that is not official, and it can be painted with a very wide brush. As suggested by Backhaus, if there is a point of overlap, it is at the private business level as signage for establishments ‘down’ to graffiti. Whereas top down signage is strictly regulated, bottom-up signage is under no such restraint, unless it crosses social taboo or legality.

## Researching the ‘linguistic landscape’

There are almost endless possibilities, issues and locale in the study of the LL (cf. Gorter 2006a; Backhaus 2007; Jaworski & Thurlow 2010b; Shohamy & Gorter 2009; Shohamy et. al 2010). Under the term linguistic landscape and its alternatives there has been generalized research on specific locations and issues that span the globe (e.g. Isle of Man, Sebba 2010; Wales, Coupland 2010; Jamaica, Dray 2010; Israel, Ben-Raefal et al. 2006; South Korea, Malinowski 2010; Ukraine, Pavlenko 2010; USA, Garvin 2010), specialized research on particular elements in a specific LL (e.g. religious and secular painted utility boxes in Israel, Guilat 2010; sex industry in Switzerland, Piller 2010; building façades in former East-Bloc countries; Gendelman & Aiello 2010; graffiti in Melbourne, Australia, Pennycook 2010), and specific genres and contexts (e.g. language minorities, Cenoz & Gorter 2006; tourism posters, Thurlow & Jaworski 2010; computer workspace, Jones 2010; war monuments, Abousnnouga, & Machin 2010).

Studying the LL tells us about the identities of the people who live in or pass through it. For Shohamy and Gorter it “offers a rich domain of “real life”, authentic language in very dynamic and energetic uses” (2009: 3). For Curtin, who researched Taiwan, the LL “both reflects peoples’ local, regional, national and transnational identities and as site/object of identity construction” (in Dagenais et. al. 2009: 254). Ben-Rafael et. al (2006: 8) are even more adamant in believing that the LL,

constitutes the very scene — made of streets, corners, circuses, parks, buildings — where society’s public life takes pace. As such, this scene carries crucial socio-symbolic importance as it actually identifies — and thus serves as the emblem of societies, communities and regions.

The LL will also reveal much about the possible hierarchies on both people and languages, particularly given that there are government/‘top down’ and private/‘bottom up’ influences at work.

The act of displaying language on official, central or local government signage, carries the important symbolic function of increasing its value and status. Thus, the presence and dominance of one language over others (in

frequency of occurrence or prominence of display) may indicate the relative demographic and institutional power of an ethno-linguistic group over others.

(Jaworski & Thurlow 2010a: 10)

The LL can also reflect changes that are at work. As minorities in a society become more and more embedded, the LL will reflect this in the ‘bottom-up’ examples, varying from private businesses to graffiti. Furthermore, as minorities are given more official recognition by state and national governments, the ‘top down’ elements of the LL follow suit. Street signs, traffic signs, signs on public facilities can reflect the functional and practical to the historical and ceremonial existence of a minority (see many examples online at “Linguistic Landscape”).

### Japan’s ‘linguistic landscape’

The author’s own daily journey through a suburban LL in Tokyo has been described (Bayne 2017). In a short 5–7 minute walk from home to train station I can encounter six foreign languages (English, French, Hawaiian, Latin, Chinese, Korean) on signage, four forms of Japanese (*kanji*, *katakana*, *hiragana* and *romaji*), and one example of a pseudo-language. Not adhering to Backhaus’ limitation to either multilingual signs or to ‘language-only’, to my casual observation must be added a very wide variation of symbolic forms that are no less vital to communication than script. Both official, top-down and private, bottom-up signage are involved.

Backhaus has researched extensively on the LL in Japan (cf. 2007; 2009; 2011a; 2011b). In a major study published in 2007 he focused on multilingual signs in Tokyo “as a nascent sign of multilingualism in Japanese society” (2007: 64). He defined sign as “any piece of written text within a spatially definable frame” (ibid., 66). Backhaus strictly holds that, “the term ‘linguistic landscape’ itself should not be expanded beyond the definition given by Landry and Bourhis (1997); that is, language written on signs” (ibid. 61), stating that “an expansion to other forms of language use in the public sphere would water down the usefulness of the concept as a whole” (ibid. 4). Even with this narrowed gloss, he collected 11,834 signs in areas around 28 stations on the JR Yamanote Line and used 2,444 in his study. Besides Japanese in all its representations and Braille,



Backhaus identified 14 languages other than Japanese, with English accounting for over 90% of the occurrences in his sample of multilingual signs. He suggests that, “one may say that multilingualism in Tokyo’s linguistic landscape is for the most part Japanese-English bilingualism” (ibid. 71–72). The study also addressed a variety of issues related to multilingualism and signs:

- \* geographic distribution of ethnic groups in Tokyo (ibid. 84–89),
- \* language diversity in signs as homophonic (i.e. exact translations), mixed, polyphonic (i.e. different content), and monophonic (only Japanese) (ibid. 90–103)
- \* code preferences, meaning the “visual hierarchies” (ibid. 103) physically rendered on signs (ibid. 103–110)
- \* visibility of the messages on signs (ibid. 110–116)
- \* idiosyncrasies in language use (ibid. 116–130)
- \* and a variety of examples of the evidence of change based on the “coexistence of older and newer versions of a given type of sign”, or ‘layering’ (ibid. 130–140)

Backhaus’ study revealed that of his 2,444 signs, 28.7% were top-down and 71.3% were bottom-up (ibid. 81), with English very frequent in bottom-up signs. The use of Japanese in top-down signs was 97% (ibid. 82). The decisions, rules and guidelines on top-down/official signs cover every aspect of their creation and location. These are laid out in a progression of manuals that reflect the actual growth and growing consciousness of internationalization in Japan:

1991 Tokyo Manual about Official Signs

1994 Shinagawa Ward Basic Manual about Street Signs

1997 Manual about Passenger Guidance Signage

2001 Guidebook about Standard Information Symbols (pictograms)

2002 Sign System Guidebook for Public Transport Passenger Facilities

2003 Guide for Making City Easy to Understand Also to Foreigners

These have been described in detail elsewhere by Backhaus (2009; 2011a). In 2016 Machida City in Tokyo created and posted on-line a ‘Machida City Multilingualization Guideline’ (“Machida” 2018). And also in 2016 it was widely reported in the media that the Geospatial Information Authority of Japan, an office of the Ministry for Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, had updated of pictogram signs on maps to help residents and especially visitors for the 2020 Tokyo Summer Olympics. The Backhaus study is in-depth, internationally-known and covers a wide range of issues, and, as he writes, it

gives “insights about increasing linguistic diversity in the Japanese capital” (2007: 64). This is aided by the government’s positive view of internationalization, the growing non-Japanese residency, and the welcoming by Japanese of the English and other foreign languages, such as Korean (Backhaus 2007).

Official, top-down signage is characterized by its attention to very strict detail and regulation, and through its promotion of Japanese language expresses ‘power’. The opposite can be said of the bottom-up, unofficial nature of the LL in Japan. As suggested above, there are perhaps no limitations except in relation to giving offence, intentionally or unintentionally. (It is of interest that the new pictograms for guide maps mentioned above have replaced the *omote manji* (卍) symbol used to denote a Buddhist temple because it looked similar to the Nazi swastika (“Japan to remove” 2015).) According to Bloomberg, the population of Japan of in 2017 was 127,966,480 of which 2,382,822 were non-Japanese, roughly 4% of Tokyo’s population is non-Japanese, and well over half of foreign residents were Chinese or Korean (Mayger 2017). Japan is still very much mono-cultural and mono-lingual which belies the results of Backhaus’ 2007 study which shows that languages other than Japanese, particularly English, feature greatly in bottom-up signage which represents over 70% of all signage. Japan is, of course, a major tourist destination, but a number of researchers conclude that English and other foreign languages function as prestige languages. The owner of the signage expresses ‘solidarity’ with a perception of “modernity and internationalization” that is “oriented to native speakers of Japanese and is anomalous or even incomprehensible to monolingual speakers of English” (Kallan & Dhonnacha 2010: 23). One need only look at the names of hair salons in Japan. I would suggest this is a phenomenon not unique to Japan despite the gusto with which it is embraced here. Curtin describes this as “vogue or display English” in her examination of the Taipei LL (2009).

## The linguistic landscape of train stations

The LL is public space, and public spaces are accessible to everyone. The LL is, in fact, a jigsaw of public spaces or micro-linguistic landscapes: suburban streets, parks, hospitals, schools, shopping malls, entertainment districts are examples of these. Each have elements in common but also those that are unique. The context for manner and behavioural posters is predominantly train

stations, of which Japan does not lack! In 2016 there were over 8,200 stations in Japan (“List” 2018) and of the 50 busiest train stations in the world 44 are in Japan (Blaster 2013). Over 100 rail companies carried 7.289 billion passengers in 2013–2014 (“Rail” 2018). Suffice to say that using train stations are an essential element of life in Japan.

The train station landscape can be divided into four generic and distinct area: access areas, entrance and foyer, transit to platforms and platforms. Obviously the scale would depend on the station.

### **Access areas**

These are areas of approach to the station entrance. These are particularly features of subway stations and include stairways and escalators from and to the surface and hallways. As forms of walled tunnels they provide ample space for all types of posters and signs (Image 1).

### **Entrance and foyer**

This area includes the outer ticket purchasing foyer, ticket wickets and inner foyer area leading to platform access. Here we can find signs that refer to various facilities (e.g. restrooms) and devices (e.g. fare-related), fixed and removable advertising, warnings and safety warnings. In many stations we may also find businesses such as kiosks and food establishments.

### **Transit to platforms**

Stairs, escalators and elevators can lead from the foyer to the platforms. These also include signs on correct direction and movement but also a variety of signs on safety and a variety of posters (Image 2).

### **Platforms**

Platforms include a wide range of signage. This includes signage on facilities (e.g. waiting rooms) and devices (e.g. beverage machines) and fixed advertising. Information related to trains is a given. As the potentially very dangerous interface between commuter passengers and trains, platforms include a large amount of signage related to warnings, safety and behaviour. Also as the ‘business-end’ of travel there is industry-related information for maintenance and train drivers and conductors. There may also be sundry information unrelated to



Image 1: Posters in a subway access passage.



Image 2: Signage on escalators to and from platforms.

aspects of travel, safety or advertising.

Each area in the train station LL includes signage unique to it. One feature that can be found in any area is posters related to manners and correct behaviour.

## Background to manners

Almost without doubt, Japan and its towns, cities and metropolis are the safest and most courteous of any in the world. In surveys to compare cities worldwide, Japan and Tokyo have consistently been ranked highest in terms of safety, friendliness and taxi and public transport services (Miller 2014). This is something to which long-term non-Japanese residents would attest. Furthermore, short- and long-term visitors would also concur that Japan is incredibly courteous and orderly in comparison to most societies, and that, as a metropolis, Tokyo is a pleasant place to be. The above claims need no more

proof than on public transport, in particular, trains. It could be said that if you want to see both a cross-section of any society and gain an insight into its values, ride its trains. If manner posters are a guide, correct behaviour and politeness are key Japanese values.

Japan has had a long history of cajoling and exhorting its populous to perform acts of kindness and to maintain social order, often in print form with visuals (Miller 2011). She (ibid. 221) writes:

...the use of visuals to illustrate decorous behavior is found throughout Japanese history. Scrolls with drawings and paintings were pressed into service as instruction and Buddhist proselytization during medieval times. Itinerant nuns and others used *etoki* (picture explanation) to explain right conduct and the dangerous of wrong behavior. *Etoki* reminds us that the illustrations of manners that we find today are a legacy of a powerful form of pedagogy.

Seaman notes that “interrelated” economic (rise of a moneyed mercantile class), political (attempts by a fading elite to maintain social control) and technological (mass printing and distribution) changes saw the “birth of the genre of the ‘instructional manual,’ books and pamphlets meant to guide an individual’s conduct and behavior in a variety of social contexts” (2011: 158). Bardsley and Miller cite Ikegami’s similar claims that Tokugawa conduct literature as “illustrated and easy-to-read, how-to books” was hugely popular especially but not solely among the growing numbers of urban dwellers in the Tokugawa period as it became readily available in print, and they go on to point out that “accessible language and graphics continue to appeal to Japanese readers, and that contemporary guides often become best sellers” (2011: 4). They (ibid. 5) contend that:

Japanese conduct literature embraces a lengthy lexicon for denoting proper deportment. Like the common English terms “manners” and “etiquette,” Japanese terms tend to overlap in usage and can blur the boundaries of one’s moral character (manners) and one’s ability to execute protocol (etiquette).

This seems very central to the role of manner posters today.

Today, parents of young children often use the ‘people are watching’ warning to control their unruly offspring in public. Even the smallest infraction to public order may result in a warning, as joggers in the inner city area of Tokyo have found (“Joggers” 2013). People are reminded at every turn of their social responsibilities. In this respect, the verbal announcements on Japanese trains are in a league of their own. Beside the obviously essential information with regard to stations and times, passengers are reminded constantly to turn off or turn down devices, not to take up too much room with body or bags, to move into and out of carriages carefully and quickly, to hold on to straps, and to not forget anything, umbrellas in particular. Considering the number of people who use headphones or who are absorbed in their mobile phones these days, we might wonder about the point or effectiveness of such announcements. Also, considering their frequency of such messages, they do tend to blend into the ‘sound-wall’ of commuting life.

Outsiders to a society with a strong Confucian base, like many countries and cultures in East Asia, may unkindly and ignorantly describe attention to public manners as a symptom of the ‘nanny state’ (“Nanny State”); that a higher authority, by telling the populous what to do or not do in public, supposedly for their own good, is taking over elements of personal choice and is being over-protective, even controlling. This is culturally insensitive. Stripped of its Western trappings and consumerism, Japan is at its base a Confucian state. As such it places great store on virtue and ethics in keeping with the three basic principles of *ren* (altruism and humaneness), *yi* (doing good and right) and *li* (correct behavior in daily life). The latter, *li*, is particularly important. It can be understood in terms of rules and customs, and systems of morals and etiquette that guide the public behavior, knowing or unknowing, of people. Correct adherence to *li* would result in a content and healthy society and its people. Active education would play a formative role in the promotion of *li*. Considering the moral duty of rulers (be they emperors or elected officials) in the Confucian state, the responsibility to remind their people of ‘the rules’ is clear. One could argue that is the ‘natural state’ of a harmonious society. In a nutshell, we could say that what some would describe as the excessive proliferation of oral, aural and visual directives is a normal condition of a Confucian-based society that values harmony and social cohesion.

## Definition and characteristics of manner posters

Eberhardinger (2016) defines manner posters as:

Commissioned artworks that include brief, textual lines of how to behave in crowded, public places... to promote culturally consented ways of nonverbally communicating with strangers who coexist in public transport contexts.

Let us look a more detailed breakdown of this definition. Manner posters are commissioned by the companies that run the train lines, particularly so by the private subway companies. Indeed the Tokyo Metro website keeps a library of their yearly series of manner posters (“Manā” 2018). All involve some form of visual representation supported by text of varying degrees of artist merit. A basic structure would include the following:

1. Main text
2. Visual
3. Sub-text
4. Issuing authority

A short ‘Main text’ would identify a manner or behavioural issue. ‘Behaviour as visuals’ would be artwork or photographs depicting the target behaviour. A ‘Sub-text’ may add information or details, possibly including sentences. Finally, the ‘issuing Authority’ would identify itself in ‘fine print’. While the exact size, spatial organization and even emphasis may differ, the majority of manner posters conform to this four-part structure (Image 3).

As Eberhardinger describes, manner posters concern acceptable behaviour in relation to others. We can identify characteristics of this:

1. about individual and/or group behaviour
2. in public trains station and trains
3. attempt to alter negative behaviour
4. attempt to reinforce positive behaviour
5. concern behaviour that affects self directly
6. concern behaviour that affects others directly
7. concern behaviour that affects others indirectly
8. are predominantly non-permanent, mainly paper-based wall items



Image 3: Posters have a four-part generic structure.

9. are of a size that is easily visible and recognizable

Eberhardinger describes them as existing in ‘public transport contexts’, which in relation to train stations, encompasses, as I have described, four areas: access areas, entrance and foyer, transit to platforms, and platforms. Finally, the ‘culturally consented ways of nonverbally communicating with strangers’ is somewhat limiting, considering my fifth characteristic, since many manner posters are about behaviour that includes safety issues. The next section will deal with these ‘culturally consented ways’.

## Categories and Focus of Manner Posters

Obviously the posters and signs are telling us something and the range is enormous. We can very roughly divide them into three kinds:

1. Negative actions, manners and behaviours
2. Positive actions, manners and behaviours
3. Necessary actions, manners and behaviour



Within each of these kinds we can identify a number of categories. Within each category we find targeted actions, manners and behavior. For example, negative actions, manners and behaviour included the category of safety of others, and an example is carelessly pulling a wheeled suitcase in a crowded platform. As a detailed taxonomy is beyond the scope of this paper I will describe them very generally. Examples of actual posters for each category are reproduced in image sets under the same titles in Appendix 1.

## **Negative actions, manners and behaviours**

### **Personal safety**

One category warns us of dangers or threats to our personal safety, either due to injury or even death. Being drunk on the station platforms, with the danger of falling onto the tracks is a possibility. Looking at a mobile phone while walking could also result in the same dire consequence. Finally, riding escalators can also be a dangerous exercise.

### **Safety of others**

While people can be a danger to themselves by their actions, unawareness in transit on platforms in general while engrossed in some other activity, such as being drunk or using a device, can also be injury- and even life-threatening to others. This is particularly so when riding escalators or using stairs.

### **Illegal and anti-social actions and behaviours**

These focus on socially abhorrent, anti-social actions that could possibly result in criminal charges. Spitting on conductors would seem to require no warnings, but such a sign exists in some stations. One on-going and unwanted distinction in Japan is the incidence of molesting of women on trains (Dunn, 1995; Mealey, 2017) and the more recent trend of surreptitious taking of indecent photographs or videos, or ‘upskirting’ (Johnson, 2014). Furthermore, more and more we can see posters that specifically address violence, usually alcohol-fuelled, against train station staff. These behaviours can be described as what one must not do.

### **Inconsiderate actions and behaviours**

There is a very wide range of actions and behaviors, predominantly while in a train carriage, that do not necessarily endanger anyone but are troublesome,

annoying, inconsiderate and impinge on the comfort and encroach on personal space of other passengers. These are the subjects of the bulk of manner posters. Actions involving belongings such as large bags, the use of devices such as mobile phones, eating, talking loudly, and blocking exits fall into this category.

Table 1: Tokyo Metro manner poster behaviours 2011–2017 (“Manā” 2018)

Behaviours	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017 tbc
Bags on seats	X		X				
Eating and rubbish	X	X	X	X			
Crowding the door	X	X	X		X		
Drunk and asleep	X						
Mobile in train	X	X	O	X			
Doing make-up	X			X			
Sleep on someone	X		X				
Leaking music	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Lining up	X	X		O	X	O	O
Wet umbrella	X	X	X	X	O	X	X
Rushing onto train	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Seat space	X	X		O	X	X	
Coughing		X	X				
Giving up Designated Seats		X	O	O	O	O	O
Loud talking		X		X	X	X	X
Trolley bags		X	X	X	O	X	
Large bags and luggage			X		O	X	X
Walking/mobile on platform				X	X	X	X
Help others (elderly etc.)					O	X	
Use mobile getting off train						X	X
Stand aside to aid exit						O	O

X - denotes behavior is featured in a negative light O - denotes behavior is featured in a positive light

The long-running Tokyo Metro manner poster campaign starts a new series in April that features a new monthly poster for twelve months (“Manā” 2018). Table 1 shows the behaviours that have featured from April 2011 to January 2018. In an interview with graphic designer Bunpei Yorifuji, whose famous set of series of manner posters ran from 2008–2010, Yorifuji revealed that the behaviours he used were based on real complaints to the Customer Relations Centre from Tokyo Metro commuters (Bull 2013). We can assume that this is the case with previous and subsequent series. While we have no way of knowing when certain behaviours appeared, it is of note that behaviors involving mobile phones have been increasing in recent years. Wet umbrellas, rushing onto trains and leaking music from headphones are perennial ‘un-favourites’. Also, we can see that, rather than only negative behaviours, poster extolling positive behaviours are more frequently featured.

In short, these listed above are the mostly typical ‘manners’ and commonsense issues.

### **Positive actions, manners and behaviours**

A limited number of manner posters praise or highlight behaviours rather than admonish, in other words, they tell commuters what *to* do rather than what *not to* do. Table 1 lists a number of these considerate actions and behaviours which I will divide into two kinds.

#### **Mindfulness**

One definition of mindfulness is “maintaining a moment-by-moment awareness of our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surrounding environment” (“What” 2018). These manner posters refer to the antithesis of inconsideration and refer to the positive actions and the regard we give to others, such as making way or space for people, making sure luggage such as backpacks are not a nuisance and such.

#### **Duty of care**

In a quasi- or actual legal sense, ‘duty of care’ may be thought of as “a formalisation of the social contract or the implicit responsibilities held by individuals towards others within society” (“Duty” 2018). What I will call ‘duty of care’ is particularly related to considering and helping others who may require or

appreciate it due to some difficulty, condition or challenged state. While it subsumes rule-driven manners related to the correct use of the designated seating areas for the elderly, injured, expecting mothers and mothers with infants, it also refers to such members of society at any time.

## **Necessary actions, manners and behaviours**

### **Rules of movement**

Features of train stations are crowds of people in states of transit, narrow and defined spaces, stairs and escalators, and very large and mobile machines, i.e. trains. There is a constant potential for stress, delay, accident, injury and even death, and in order to avoid anything untoward, a category of posters address these issues. These include such things as correct ways to move from foyers to platforms and ways to line while waiting for trains.

## **Other Possible Areas of Examination of Manner Posters**

I have limited the scope of this section on manners posters to a definition and a description of key categories. There are many other ways to describe and analyze them, just some of which I will touch on briefly.

### **Dichotomies**

There is a wide range of dichotomies that could be used to categorize manner posters. For instance, a study might look at the use of artwork and photographs, or direct and indirect admonishment of a negative behavior.

### **Language**

A similar study to that conducted by Backhaus could be used to examine the range of languages used and how.

### **Tone**

How are the target behaviours presented? Especially the sets of poster series by Tokyo Metro make their point in a light, colourful and humorous way, but this is not always the case.

## Participants

It is rare that a manner poster does not include actions perpetrated and suffered by characters. How are these characters portrayed visually and why?

## Influences

Finally, there are many potential influences on manner posters, both in the sense of how they are constructed and drawn, and a key cultural question in why they exist at all.

## Conclusion

Train stations are one of many micro-landscape in the wider linguistic landscape, certainly of any city or urban setting. The station environs contain a wide variety of textual and visual information, wall posters being one. Manner posters that aim to alter poor or encourage better behaviour are a ubiquitous feature of train stations in Japan.

People, as commuters, are rarely (or rarely intend to be) in train stations for too long since these places are portals leading to somewhere else. When they are in stations, they are often more focused on getting through and out of them as fast as possible! It is somewhat ironic, however, that this haste may lead to many of the target behaviours of manner posters. For many different reasons and in a myriad of ways, owners of manner posters urge people to commute smoothly, safely, mindfully and considerately.

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#### Author's Note

- 1: Unless otherwise credited, all photographs are by the author.
- 2: A–4 colour copies of all or part of this paper is available from the author on request.
3. Bayne (2017) includes many illustrative photographs not included here.

## Appendix 1: Sample Sets of Categories of Manner Posters

Each sample set corresponds to the like-titled section in the text.

### Personal safety



### Safety of others



## Illegal & anti-social behavior



## Inconsiderate actions and behaviours



## Mindfulness



# Manner Posters as an Element of the Japanese Linguistic Landscape

## Duty of Care



## Rules of movement

